Huddersfield Local History Society

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Huddersfield

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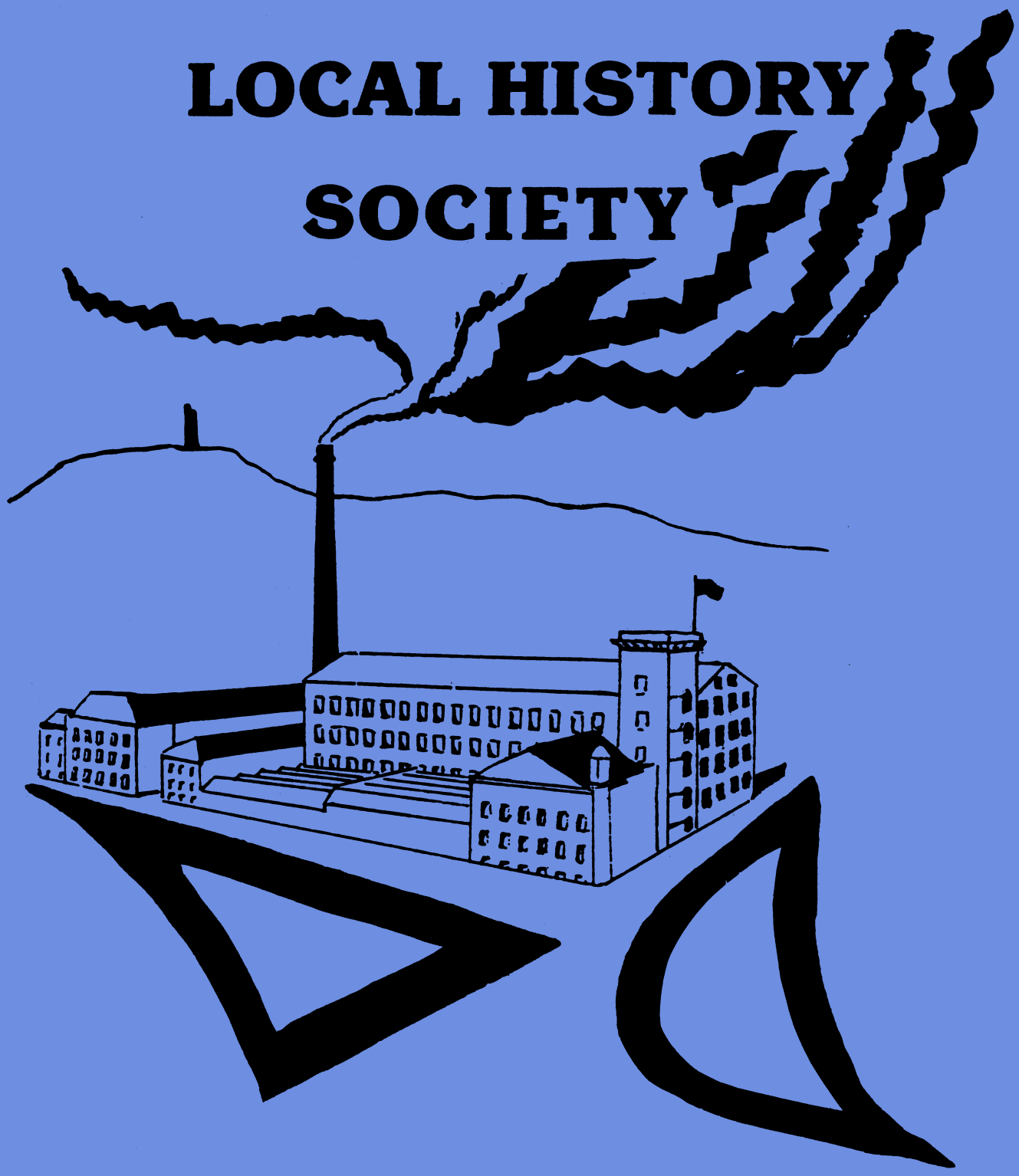

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NORMAN PORRITT . . .
HUDDERSFIELD'S SURGEON - NOVELIST

By Dr. J.B. Eagles

Thirty odd years ago I was the secretary of Huddersfield Medical Society, and had in my possession the old minutes of the Society, going back to 1880. More recently, through the kindness of the present secretary, Dr. Harling, I have been able to have another look at these minutes. The years that I find most fascinating are the quarter of a century, 1880 - 1905. The Medical Society had been re-founded in 1880, and the members were full of enthusiasm. But more important than that, it was a time of adventure and discovery in the country as a whole, especially in the field of surgery. This was not, as one might expect primarily due to the use of anaesthetics; both ether and chloroform had become available before 1850. What made all the difference in those late Victorian and Edwardian years to the success of operations, and the survival of patients who had been operated on, was the recognition of infection as the chief hazard in the practice of surgery.

In a paper presented to the Society in 1896 Jon Irving, one of the Huddersfield surgeons, recalled surgical practice at the Infirmary 23 years earlier, when he first started:

> *"The surgeons wore woollen gowns, which were very seldom washed, and the house surgeon put on his oldest coast for operations, and, to put it mildly, scrupulous care as not taken with the hands. Instruments were handed to the operator straight from the cupboard, and lotion for the hands was never thought of."*

Thereafter the teaching of Joseph Lister, with its emphasis on cleanliness and the use of antiseptics, was introduced to Huddersfield Infirmary. There was an immediate rise in the number of operations performed, and a major reduction in the risk involved: in 1874 there were 55 operations with 42 deaths, but in 1895 there were 400 operations with 47 deaths.

This spirit of new development, new conquest, comes through in the minutes of the medical Society. Surgical procedures new to Huddersfield are described at almost every meeting. And new discoveries in basic science are regularly reported from all over the world; the discovery of X-rays and the use of antitoxin in diphtheria were both discussed at the Society well before the turn of the century.

Many of the members of Huddersfield Medical Society performed operations occasionally. And even those who were Honorary Surgeons to the Infirmary did not spend all their time in the operating theatre or the surgical ward; they were general practitioners as well, and their work in the community occupied most of their time. Nor was there any significant degree of specialisation. The same man would, at different times, perform an abdominal operation, amputate a limb or conduct a complicated midwifery case.

It is against this background that I want to discuss the career of a man who was a medical practitioner in Huddersfield from 1881 until 1911, and was a surgeon at the Infirmary for nearly all of that time. He was called Norman Porritt, and he was a native of Huddersfield, being born into a well-known family of wool merchants. His family home was at Clare Hill, which was, at that time, a very good address. Norman Porritt was born in 1858. His first cousin, ten years older than he, was George Taylor Porritt of Crosland Hall, the famous Huddersfield naturalist. Norman Porritt was educated at Huddersfield Collegiate School, and then went to Leeds Medical School. He graduated M.R.C.S. in 1879, and L.R.C.P. the following year. He clearly a brilliant student. When, 4 years later, he applied for the post of Honorary Surgeon at Huddersfield, he presented a package of glowing testimonials. As was customary at the time, these were published and can still be found in the Local History Library at Huddersfield: here is a typical example, from Mr. Nunneley, the eye surgeon:

> *". . . at the Leeds School of Medicine, where Mr. Porritt received his medical education, he was probably the most distinguished student of his time; and took nearly all the prizes, both in scientific and also in practical subjects such a medicine and surgery, which were open to him."*

There are more than a dozen testimonials in the same vein. But perhaps the most interesting is one from Dr. Clifford Allbutt, a leading physician at Leeds general Infirmary. It comes in the form a of a letter to Porritt himself:

". . . The prizes you obtained were many and valuable, and I can testify that they were obtained by solid acquirements, and by no cram and good fortune. For instance to my surprise and pleasure I found you in possession of full notes of many of my clinical and other lectures, which you had taken down by shorthand, and many of which you kindly copied out for my own use and for publication."

Throughout his working life Porritt was a great enthusiast for shorthand. Later on he taught the subject at a class at the Mechanics Institute.

Immediately after qualifying Porritt worked as a house surgeon in Leeds, and then had a similar post at Huddersfield. In 1881 he became a member of the Medical Society and remained a member until he left the town in 1911. Much later he became President of the Medical Society, and also Chairman of the local division of the British Medical Association. In 1883, shortly before he became an Honorary Surgeon to the Infirmary, he obtained a gold medal from the Medical Society of London for a Thesis on the surgical management of fluid on the chest.

Right from 1881, when he first joined the Medical Society, Porritt was a regular contributor to the meetings, presenting cases, giving longer talks and taking part in discussion. As I said earlier no one was a 'specialist' in those days, and Porritt's contributions covered a very wide spectrum. Here is a list, by no means complete, of the subjects on which he addressed his fellow members: wrist-drop, leg ulcers, convulsions complicating childbirth, atropine poisoning, cysts of the ovaries, peritonitis, further complications of midwifery, recurrent dislocation of the knee, cysts of the kidney, toxic reactions of drugs given to combat fever, tubal pregnancy, gastric ulcer and scurvy.

There are three occasions on which Porritt addressed the Society which are perhaps of more interest to the layman. In 1883 he proposed that they should set up a register of nurses. At this time most nurses did not have official qualifications, and doctors were anxious to have a list of those with good experience, on whom they could rely. This proposal was enthusiastically adopted by his colleagues, and a committee was set up, with Porritt as a member, to put it into effect. Three years later the Society minutes record: "Mr. Porritt showed a new ether inhaler of his own invention." Finally in 1890 he presented to his colleagues a Temperature and Pulse Chart, which he devised, which could be obtained from Cuthbert's... price three halfpence each, or 12 for a shilling.

Meanwhile he had begun to write fiction, for pleasure and profit. There is a short article in the Examiner of February 3rd 1925, which gives an account of Porritt's early literary efforts:

"Dr. Porritt's first shot as a freelance hit the mark for the editor of 'Cassell's Saturday Journal' adopted an article on 'The Humours of a Doctor's Life', and other contributions. The author then went for higher game, and was fortunate enough t find hospitality for his writings in the 'Globe'. But the calls on the time of a busy doctor left him little leisure for literary work, and he had literally to steal the time devoted to writing. This had to be done at odd moments, so that the currents of his thoughts were often interrupted . . . Nevertheless he managed to find time to write a good number of articles, and he had little difficulty in getting them accepted. A football serial was syndicated in the north of England in 1892, and this was followed by a series of sketches and short stories dealing with hospital life. In 1907 the 'Car Illustrated' published a series on humorous lines dealing with motorcars. His work also appeared in the 'Strand Magazine', 'Lloyd's Magazine', the 'National Review', and many London and provincial papers".

"CORNERED"

Meanwhile Dr. Porritt had embarked on a major work of fiction. In 1891 there appeared a novel, written by him and entitled 'Cornered'. This is a rather surprising article to be undertaken by a provincial medical man, since a good deal of the action takes place in London, and is concerned with banking and the Stock Exchange. The

villains of the piece are a wicked stockbroker and a corrupt bank manager. Embroiled in their machinations are two cousins, the hero, Robert Mettleby, and his scapegrace relative, Algernon Bertram. They share a spinster aunt, Miss Mettleby, from whom they have great expectations.

Miss Mettleby is, for me, by far the most lively and interesting character in the book. She is a devotee of fringe medicine and pseudo-science. When staying in a hotel or with relatives, she insists that her bed is so orientated that its electromagnetic field harmonises with that of the bedroom. She kept a diary in which she recorded various experiences of scientific interest. Here is one example:

> *"4 Feb. 1866 2-26pm. Effect of wet metal: On going into the yard on a damp day, took hold of the pump handle. All at once a tremor rushed through the frame, and the moistened metal set free in the system darting currents of electricity."*

When Miss Mettleby comes to London, her main purpose is to consult Prof. Wittowski the "great Polish phrenologist, psychometric expert and mesmeric exponent." He was to be found in a small shop with a room behind, near the Holborn end of Oxford Street. Among other things the Professor supplied pots of the 'Purified Balm of Mesopotamia', at five guineas a time. Miss Mettleby describes what the Professor has done for her:

"It is my over excited brain which has brought me to London with all its drawbacks. It is three years since I consulted Prof. Wittowski. He told me which organs I ought to develop and which I ought to keep in check. My organs are so variegated, and I have to keep constantly on the alert."

When Robert comes engaged to Ethel who is a nurse, Miss Mettleby insists that they go and see Prof. Wittowski, to check that they are phrenologically suited to one another. He reports unfavourably. Robert is very angry and is disinherited by Miss Mettleby. As a result of various nefarious activities by his bank manager, he also loses his job as a bank clerk. Miss Mettleby appeals to me as a great comic character. The denouement of the novel takes place in her home at Greenfield. But I will not reveal any more. It is a good read. I can recommend it. There are several copies in the local history library.

Before leaving the subject of Porritt's first novel, I would like to draw attention to a small subplot which occurs in one of the early chapters. Algernon Bertram has been sent overseas by the wicked stockbroker, leaving is wife in London with a small baby, in very poor circumstances. The baby becomes ill. Mrs. Bertram cannot afford a doctor so she sends of Nancy Bell, a 'Mrs. Gamp' sort of character:

> *"well 'm," resumes Mrs. Bell authoritatively, "Yer child has brownkitis and hinflaymation, and yer must put him in a steam blanket, and poultice his chest with oatmeal and slippery hellum. And if yer wants 'im to get better, yer must give 'im two drops of gin, half a teaspoonful of syrup of vierlets, and 5 drops of Indian brandy every three hours."*

On this regime the baby grows worse and worse. Dr. Scott is sent for, and he makes an immediate diagnosis:

> *"Do you know that Indian brandy is just another name for laudanum, which is a deadly poison, and your child is suffering from the effects of narcotic poisoning?"*

The misuse of opium-containing medicines is thought to have been responsible for a great many infant deaths in Victorian times. There was a Poisons Act in 1868, but this did not control patent medicines; and such medicines, many of which contained opium, continued to be freely available till well into the present century.

Under Dr. Scott's care, Annie Bertram's baby begins to improve. But the stockbroker, who is making a pass at Annie, arranged for a famous consultant to be called in Dr. Pathologue is in the house a very short time, and this is the author's comment:

> *"In the interest of truth, we must say that the same evening there was a wonderful improvement in the little sufferer. Whether it was that the disease had run its course; or that Dr. Scott's remedies had at length controlled it; or whether the directions of Dr. Pathologue . . . who spent quite seven minutes in the house . . . had had the happy effect of ameliorating*

the symptoms, will never be known."

This rather sarcastic reference to the great Dr. Pathologue suggests that Porritt did not always regard his professional colleagues with unqualified respect. This is further illustrated by two other medical portraits: Miss Mettleby's practitioner is presented as a pompous ass, and in his second novel he shows us a money-grabbing doctor quite prepared to falsify an insurance report. In a later, more serious work, Porritt says:

"At forty a man is either a physician or a fool, though of course he may be both!"

RELIGION AND HEALTH

That last quotation was from a book which Porritt produced in 1905 called 'Religion and Health.' When Dr. Porritt left Huddersfield in 1911 his colleagues, at the annual dinner of that year paid tribute to him as a writer. But they were referring to 'Religion and Health'; his novel was never mentioned. This book produced in 1905 is a work of philosophy and deep thought. His mind contention is that true health has always been, and must always be associated with religion. He points to the Greeks where early medicine was based on the temple, and the middle ages when the care of the sick was associated with monasteries and hospitals run by religious orders. Most of all he purports to show that the Jews are less prone to many diseases that are gentiles:

"The Jew can show a health, a vigour and longevity superior to those of the races among whom he has been allowed on sudderence to exist."

He thinks that diet, especially care in the selection of meat, may be a factor, but that it is to his religion generally that a Jew owes his freedom from disease.

Finally Porritt considers the effects of the absence of religion in a society. In particular he attacks the evils of alcohol, rampant in the society of late Victorian Britain . . . between 1876 and 1900, 27,413 men and 15,802 women were certified as dying due to the direct effects of drink, and the figures for cirrhosis of the liver were even worse, 86,037 men and 37,361 women. He then discussed the evil effects on families, and the children of drinking parents.

'Religion and Health' is a typically Victorian production, very much of its time; most of its arguments would not stand up to contemporary analysis. Nevertheless one cannot but admire the extent of Porritt's knowledge, and the vigour of much of his writing; and I expect many modern environmentalists would be prepared to endorse the sentiments of this passage:

". . . all the efforts of sanitarians, doctors and social reformers to improve the standard of health consist in bringing God's gift's unadulterated and unimpaired to the service of man, as they were before the glut of man's intentions had run riot among them."

FAREWELL TO HUDDERSFIELD

Late in 1911 or early in 1912 Dr. Porritt left Huddersfield for good. He was becoming increasingly deaf, and presumably he could no longer manage his general practice and the hurly burly of an Infirmary outpatients clinic; in 'Religion and Health' he writes about seeing an average of 100 patients in an afternoon at the Infirmary. In the autumn of 1911 he was present at the Medical Society's Annual Dinner, and everyone wished him well. The menu for that Dinner is still in existence, ad it commemorates both that fateful years and Porritt's departure. 1911 was the year of the National Insurance Act. The menu has a cartoon which shows the dragon of National Insurance being ridden through the sky by Lloyd George. Below, the ship of Medicine (a boat names Asklepios) is on the rocks; at the bottom is the caption "timemus Cambrensem et dona ferentem," . . . we fear the Welshman ad the gifts he brings. The cartoon also shows an aeroplane in the sky which is labelled 'Pinner'. This is meant to depict Norman Porritt, leaving Huddersfield and retiring to Pinner in the South of England.

In fact Porritt did not go to Pinner; or if he did, he did not stay there very long. He was soon established in Wale at Betts-y-Coed, where he worked for some ears as an ophthalmologist, before retiring completely to Llandudno. He soon became very much occupied with writing again, contributing to all sorts of magazines and periodicals, medical and non-medical. He produced two short medical works during his retirement, "The Abdomen in Labour", and "Eclampsia in England and Wales". The first was intended mainly for students. The second

promulgated a theory he had held for may years. Eclampsia is a term for the convulsions which may occur in late pregnancy, associated with a high blood pressure. Porritt attempted to prove that the distribution of this dangerous condition was related to the levels of lead in drinking water.

THE FACTORY KING

In 1925 Dr. Porritt produced his second novel, which he called 'The Factory King.' I must confess I did not find this as good as his previous one, but those born and bred in Huddersfield may think differently, for the setting of the novel is a very thinly disguised Huddersfield, and many of the landscapes described may well be familiar to the initiated. The Factory King is course Richard Oastler. He appears in the novel, though not as a principal character, but his opinions and the cause for which he strove are central tot he book. Porritt tells the reader in his foreword:

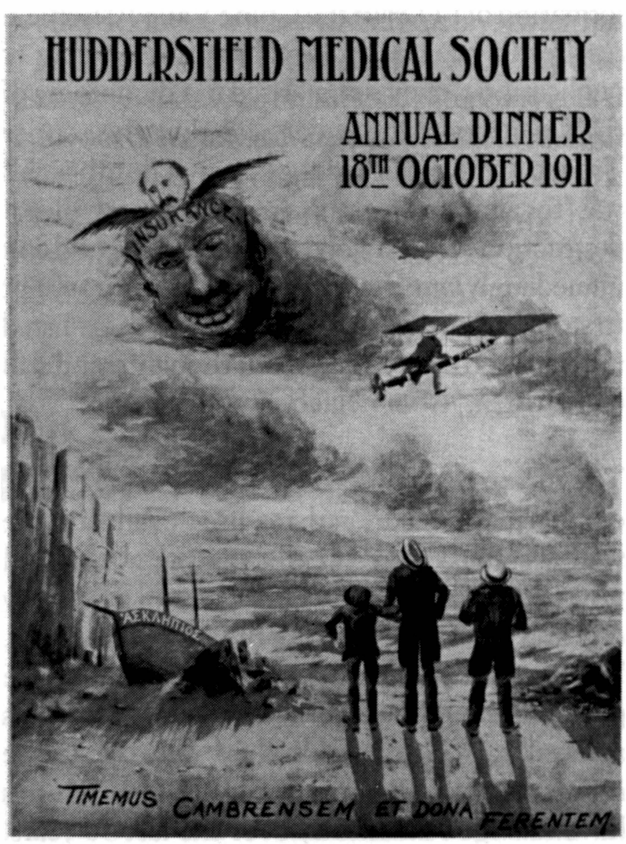
> *"The writer has not drawn on his imagination for he facts. His descriptions are taken from contemporary records and writings of the Factory Movement."*

To some extent this is true. One incident in the book is a mill-fire in which factory children perish, shut in the mill by a wicked overseer. This is obviously directly based on the tragedy which is commemorated by the monument in Kirkheaton churchyard. There is also a description of a meeting in the centre of Huddersfield address by Oastler, which owes much to contemporary sources. But these factual elements are woven into a romance centred around Philip Burniston, the son of a mill-owner and himself a pattern weaver. Much of the novel is concerned with the ups-and-downs of his love affair with Ruth, the daughter of a wealthy Huddersfield citizen, who is very anxious for her to do better for herself than to marry Philip. The pace of the novel increases when the wicked overseer, Wivelstoke, is murdered; Philip's gun is found near the body, and he himself has been seen with something over his shoulder. This is in fact the broken 'reed' of Philip's loom, but at a distance it looked like a gun. In the end of course all is well. There is a deathbed confession by the real murderer. Ruth's father is forced to agree to her engagement to Philip. Philip himself, his family mill rebuilt after the fire, goes into partnership with some of Oastler's disciplines, in the running of a mill which will stick to a 10 hour day.

There are many members of the Huddersfield Medical Society in the late Victorian era whin I would like to have known. There was old Samuel Knaggs, the doyen of the society, who was always supporting practitioners in the town whom other members regarded as ethically undesirable. There was Dr. MacGregor of Albert House, Lockwood, a powerful figure in any controversy; Clifford Stephenson used to recall going to school when he was a boy, and Dr. MacGregor was on his death bed; Lockwood road was covered with straw to muffle the sound of waggon wheels.

But most of all I would like to have had a conversation with Norman Porritt, a man of great learning and very wide interests, who was not at all pompous, and whose writing, and I imagine his speech, was leavened with a very attractive sense of humour.

Norman Porritt died at Llandudno, at the age of 82, in 1940, when Britain was on the threshold of a new world, so very different from the late Victorian and Edwardian era in which the novelist-surgeon enjoyed his heyday.



SAVING THE TEXTILE HERITAGE

"In 1939 the Colne Valley was a great industrial centre - forested by mill chimneys. Travelling down the valley at dusk you saw great blocks of brilliant light all along the Colne, set at strange angles and different levels - the mills working overtime with their thousands of looms clacking within."
So wrote Phylis Bentley of the prewar textile industry, but half a century later, the picture couldn't be more different. Now, far from being industrial powerhouses, the woollen mills have become an endangered species and a group has been formed to try to ensure that some, at least, survive. Lesley Kipling explains the importance of their work.

Protect our Industrial Textile Heritage (PITH) was formed in the summer of 1994 in response to the demolition of Holmbridge Mills. This event was a tragedy and many people were forced to stand by and watch because efforts to preserve an unlisted building were useless once the permission had been granted. A decision was made that any repetition of this event must be resisted and that the preservation of our few remaining mills of interest should be ensured. This would sent ail the listing of previously unlisted mills, and also the enforcement of legal protection for those few already listed. The initial announcement of the formation of PITH in the Colne Valley Chonicle resulted in two telephone calls within an hour of publication. They summarised the dichotomy of the situation. One caller said that the sooner Titanic was demolished the better. The other call was to alert me to the imminent and illegal destruction of Westwood Mills. That second call immediately launched us into action in an attempt to stop any further activity. Both of these listed mills are at the forefront of our thoughts, and still under threat, from neglect if nothing else!

The recent history of the mills which are part of our heritage makes sad reading. All but the youngest of us can remember a time when local mills, busily working 24 hours a day, were a very real and prominent feature of Huddersfield life. The noise, the smell, the smoking chimneys, the great buildings themselves were familiar features and taken for granted - they were what the industrial West Riding was all about. Things have changed drastically over the last 30 years. Very few mills are still working and used for their original purpose. Many have disappeared completely, their valuable stone 'recycled' for other purposes. This is no longer a textile town.

Many mills which have gone are no great loss - individually they had no particular architectural or historic interest though, collectively, they formed a major part of our landscape. But the loss of others is far more sad and disturbing, because they were of importance in their own right. A number spring to mind - the historic (and listed) Kings Mill, the Old Corn Mill in Slaithwaite, the aforementioned Holmbridge Mills and others. All of these were a part of our heritage now lost forever, impossible to replace.

What was once commonplace in our area is now becoming a rarity, and all the remaining mills need to be looked at with a new eye. At the time of the last major listing survey there were so many mills in our area that the majority were dismissed as unworthy of consideration just because of the sheer weight of numbers. Times have changed and so many have now gone that those left must be reconsidered. A new survey is underway and we must hope that this will take account of changed conditions and recognise the need for a rethink. Sadly, it still seems to be official belief that the preservation of one mill of a particular type is sufficient - so long as one remains somewhere in Yorkshire this is enough and others need not be preserved. This seems a very restricted view. Locally, it is our own heritage that we think of rather than a more global view, and as we look more and more to tourism as a new industry we must consider the need to keep as much of the character of the area intact as possible. Visitors from outside want to see the essence of our area, not modern developments which make them indistinguishable from other towns.

Although there is a sad catalogue of demolition of buildings which should have been preserved, there are also fine examples of what can be done. Joseph Kaye's Mill at Folly Hall is one of these. A magnificent building, it has been restored and put to a new and practical use. To be used is the greatest protection any building can have and it

is important that the destruction of mills is prevented until viable and acceptable uses are found for them as an alternative to demolition. Neglect and vandalism are the two great enemies of empty and disused buildings. PITH can not claim any great successes so far, but we do have the support of many local groups and individuals, and we feel that if nothing else we have raised awareness of the need for a proper policy.

The fight is not only to prevent demolition and ensure that more buildings are listed, but also to enforce, more rigorously, protection for those which are. To this end we are pressing for Government funds to be made available to help fund necessary repairs. We fully appreciate the large sums of money often involved, and that many owners, with the best will in the world, are unable to meet the costs of keeping a building in good order. We would look for concerted and enthusiastic efforts to be made by Government, Local Councils and owners to seek new uses for redundant mills. Too often demolition and redevelopment of a site is seen as an easy option, and it has to be said that some owners of listed mills would be only too happy to see them collapse, thus solving a problem. We are all aware of many fortuitous fires and other accidents - custodians of our heritage should not be allowed to profit by its destruction. Very few mills in the Kirklees area are listed, far fewer than many people think. Of those few some are in a state of near collapse. Local authorities have a duty to preserve listed buildings, stepping in if necessary to carry out urgent repairs which can then be recharged to the owner, or in extreme cases, using compulsory purchase orders, purchasing at a nominal sum, where it seems there is wilful neglect. Severe penalties exist for those who deliberately destroy listed buildings, though these are seldom enforced. The carrot of financial aid together with the stick of legal action might have some effect, but a system of grants and cooperation is more desirable. Wilful neglect is just as harmful to a building as deliberate destruction - either way demolition is the end result.

Neglect does bad to many fine buildings, becoming eyesores, and often there comes a point when those who wish for their preservation agree they would be better gone. But this is not an inevitable fate - timely repairs and a small amount of care and maintenance are far cheaper than eventual total refurbishment, and some form of grant aid should be made available.

PITH is not advocating the preservation of every textile mill, regardless of worth, but it is dedicated to protecting those which are of special interest. We do not pretend to have the answers, but we would like to help others work towards finding a solution to the problems of maintaining our heritage, and to this end we would welcome any support.

For those who feel that sufficient mills in our area have been listed, here is a catalogue of reality. Of the vast number which once existed in the Huddersfield Borough, 22 are listed; in Colne Valley 5, Holme Valley 4; Kirkburton 5; Meltham 1 and the whole of North Kirklees 2. Any other listings refer only to chimneys, gateposts, etc. 37 mills out of hundreds! Many which still stand are worthy of listing, greater protection is needed for those few still standing and listed which are nevertheless at great risk. If you value our textile heritage, please help our campaign.

AN ORCHESTRAL TRADITION: MR WATKINSON REMEMBERS.

Huddersfield's choral music is world famous, and this year Kirklees Council celebrates its contribution, through 21 years of Town Hall concerts. But the subscription concerts are over a century older - as this extract from the Examiner of 1911 recalls (submitted by E. Law).

During the sixty years existence of the "Examiner" signally useful service in a great variety of spheres has been rendered to Huddersfield, his native town, by Mr. John Watkinson. It is, however, no disparagement to the rest of his public work to say that he is best known as the enterprising promoter of the Subscription Concerts. In conversation with a representative of the "Examiner" Mr. Watkinson stated that the

concerts had evolved from a series of lectures which were promoted by the young man associated with Highfield Chapel, and held in the school room connected with that place of worship. The lectures were begun in 1865, fourteen years after the first issue of the "Examiner", and were continued for several years under the management of a committee. When the committee declined to run the risk of continuing the lectures, some ten years after they were started, Mr. Watkinson became responsible, and, combined with musical evenings, the lectures were carried on with great success.

In 1879 the lecturers' fees, rent of the room, printing and advertising and other expenses amounted to about £70 for twelve evenings. The evenings grew in popular favour, and in 1881 the Town Hall, then recently opened, was engaged as an experiment. The lecturer on that occasion was one of Huddersfield's eminent sons, Mr. (now Sir) Walter Parratt, the Master of the King's Musick, and Mrs. Hutchinson was the vocalist. In the following year half the evenings were held in the Town Hall and half in Highfield School room. The 1883-4 series took place in the Town Hall, and all the subsequent lecturers or concerts have been held there. The title of "Huddersfield Subscription Concerts" was adopted in 1886.

Mr. Watkinson has now been the promoter of the concerts for well over thirty years. During that time he has been the means of bringing to Huddersfield all the brightest stars in the musical firmament, and for that alone he is deserving of the warmest gratitude of his fellow townsmen. He has done a great deal, not only by his own concerts, but by energetic work in connection with the various musical societies of the town, to raise the status of Huddersfield as a musical town, and enhance its high reputation as a community devoted to the art.

Many of the other activities of Mr. Watkinson embrace the whole period of the "Examiner's" history. In chess circles his name is a household word, and it is interesting to learn that he was the first president of the Huddersfield Chess Club, the inception of which dates back to the year prior to the establishment of this journal. Mr. Watkinson, when elected to that honourable position, had not passed his teens. He was succeeded in the office by Mr. David Marsden, the grandfather of the present Mr. John Marsden. Mr. Watkinson was the editor of a chess column which appeared in the Huddersfield College magazine. He also edited the first seven volumes of the "British Chess magazine", which was founded by him in 1881, as a continuation of the chess section of the College magazine, and is now published in Leeds.

One story which Mr. Watkinson tells of the late Judge Willis, who was a pupil sat the Huddersfield College at the same time that he was, must not be omitted. Several young fellows about sixteen years of age met to participate the game of chess in Mr. Watkinson's summerhouse in West Parade. They were seriously minded lads, and one of them said, "I wonder if we could have been spending our time better than we are doing." They were a little startled when young Willis said "We might have been praising God," a remark that has remained in Mr. Watkinson's mind ever since.

Mr. Watkinson's interest in cricket and football is well known, and he has many reminiscences of both pastimes, to say nothing of a voluminous collection of newspaper reports and articles in his well-arranged and bulky "scrap" books. He remembers that time when the present club at Fartown used the old rifle field (now a portion of Greenhead Park) as the playing ground. Mr. Watkinson, an enthusiastic cricketer, played with the Huddersfield College team between sixty and seventy years ago. His position was that of "long stop". He recalls a match between the College team and the Huddersfield Gentleman's Club, when the Rev. Canon Turnbull, the Vicar of Penistone, who has achieved some notoriety of late, and who had them just completed his career at Cambridge, was a member of the latter team.

Another match of which Mr. Watkinson has vivid recollection was played on the College ground. The teams were "All England" and a local "22". George Parr, a member of the All England team, and the greatest batsman of the day was not out 99 when the stumps were drawn at night, and there was much speculation as to whether he would reach the century when he resumed his innings. The chagrin of his supporters can be better imagined than described when

after the first over on the second day he was given out without making any addition to his score.

Mr. Watkinson was one of the first pupils of the Huddersfield College, which was commenced in 1838 in two cottages near the site of the present St. Paul's Church. He was but five years of age and below the limit at which boys were admitted, but he was accepted because his elder brother, the late Mr. Edwards Watkinson, was a pupil. Although of such tender years he had already been to three schools. The first was taught by Miss Clay, a relative of the late Mrs. George Tomlinson. It stood where Messrs. Brigg's warehouse stands. The next was under Ramsden Street Chapel, and was taught by Miss Cousins. The third was kept by a Mr. Greathead, in a small street between Upperhead Row and Market Street. When the new College buildings were opened the boys walked in procession from the old school to the new. He remembers the first principal, Dr. Wright, and the vice-principal, Dr. Milne, the latter of whom became the principal when Dr. Wright left. Mr. Hardy, Dr. Sharpe and Mr. W.J.C. Miller were notable amongst subsequent principals and vice-principals. The building now used as a secondary school for boys was ultimately acquired for the Corporation, who carried out alterations ad extensions at a cost of £5,000.

When Mr. Watkinson was a boy, Huddersfield had no railway facilities. The nearest station was at Cooper Bridge, to reach which intending passengers had either to walk or hire a special conveyance; or travel by an omnibus which made the journey twice a day, starting from an inn opposite the Parish Church. The railway line, constructed by the Lancashire and Yorkshire Co., passed through Elland, and as a lad he regarded it as a great treat to walk there with a companion and watch trains enter or emerge from the tunnel. The carriages were of a primitive character, and were rather less comfortable than the present goods waggons. There were no covers, ad holes were bored in the bottom for the rain to escape through. At that time there was no railway communication with Wales, the furthest point in that direction being Chester, and Mr. Watkinson recalls the fact that even after the Welsh line had been opened, there was no branch to Llandudno from the main line. That place was a scarcely known fishing village.

Mr. Watkinson has in his possession a "Bradshaw" for January, 1843, quite a miniature affair compared with the present complication. Much of the information is curious, and even amusing, to the present generation. For instance, the heights above the sea level of all the railway lines are given. The fares, too, included the cost of conveying passengers in their own private carriages placed on trucks. They are set out as follows:- "From Manchester to Leeds; 3d per mile; second class. Gentlemen's four wheeled carriages, 6d per mile; servants riding outside, and children waggon fare; a single horse, two wheeled carriage, or pony phaeton, 4 1/2d per mile". Mr. Watkinson "assisted", but only in boyish fashion, in the construction of the London and North Western railway which runs through Huddersfield.

Old Huddersfield is depicted elsewhere in this issue and Mr. Watkinson's recollection of what the town was like between sixty and seventy years ago agrees with the impression there conveyed.

A COACH TO CAWTHORNE: THE JUNE EXCURSION

Covering one of the most picturesque parts of our area on a particularly balmy evening, this proved to be one of the most enjoyable and exclusive trips of recent years. Commencing in Denby Dale and progressing through Gunthwaite and Cawthorne to Cannon Hall, it became something of a Tourde Force for our guide, Mr W.H. Senior who has made a lifelong study of the district.

First stop was in Gunthwaite, ancestral home of the Bosville family, whose most enduring monument is, of course, the famous barn. Superlatives lend to proliferate when this building is discussed and it is widely described as the best in the county but, as our speaker pointedly observed, there are three things that it most certainly is not. It is not Elizabethan (being erected in 1550), it is of aisle and nave

construction with not a cruck in sight and most definitely, it is not a little barn - it's sole function was to store the produce of the Bosville's own estates. The family and the hall are long gone, but the barn, recently re-roofed, seems likely to endure for many years to come.

Having established that the Gunthwaite barn was no such thing, an example of a genuine cruck barn was soon included as a means of compensation. Nether End Farm, a few miles away, has a small but well made set of crucks now encased in stone works and carrying the date 1663.

No longer so visible, but once an important part of local tradition are the Gunthwaite Springs, whose medicinal qualities were said to equal those of Harrogate. The sulphurous waters ran into a trough in Gunthwaite Hall Lane End where, once a year, on the first Sunday in May, they became supposedly charged with the miraculous powers that could cure scurvy, inflammations, liver complaints and, no doubt, a good deal more. Philip Ahier in his *Legends and Traditions of Huddersfield and its District* recounts an example of one such Spa Sunday.

"It has a spring of water in which the people of the district have wonderful faith. They look upon it as a sort of cure-all, but if you are to be cured you must drink of the waters on one special day in the year - the first Sunday in May. On other days the spring is just water. Most of the pilgrims brought bottles and cups with them. They 'supped the water' made faces and filled the bottles for their friends. One old lady, after handing a cup to her daughters, asked what they thought of it. One expressively described the water as 'muck' and another said it tasted like 'rotten eggs'".

There was also a suggestion that the taste may have been influenced by the silver ore deposits in the area, and as we left the area the site of one former silver mine was pointed out. Beyond the mine and the medieval field strips the road led on to the principal objective of the tour - Cannon Hall, former home of the Spencer-Stanhope family.

The estate had been purchased by John Spencer from the Hartley family, but it was the failure of the direct Spencer line in 1775 that gave the estate its impetus to expansion. Walter, the son of Ann Spencer and Walter Stanhope of Horsforth prefixed the Spencer name to his own in grateful memory of his Cawthorne ancestors and dutifully ensured the succession with fifteen children. The Hall itself grew, with the addition of two wings in the 1760's and extra floors at the turn of the century. This created the house largely as it appears today, still presiding over its tranquil landscaped valley in a scene as far removed from the conventional slag-heap image of Barnsley as it is possible to get.

This is, of course, no longer a family home and Barnsley Corporation have been the masters here since 1951. Their story is now in the hands of historians, notably Mr Senior, who presented a detailed account at our September meeting, but some tangible memorials do remain, less than a mile away, in Cawthorne Parish Church.

There was a church here before Doomsday and some of the present building dates from the 13th century, but much of the present structure is a product of the Victorian 'restoration' of 1875-80. The work was carried out by the Hull born architect G.F. Bodley who had worked on several Yorkshire churches, and Cannon Hall itself, but this particular church, at least in Pevsner's opinion was 'not amongst his memorable works'. Be that as it may, All Saints was the Spencer-Stanhope's local church, and their memorials are a notable feature of its interior, notably a stained glass window designed by the family's very own artist. John Riddam Spencer was a Pre-Raphaelite of some standing before ill-health encouraged a permanent move to the kinder climate of Florence in 1880. His speciality was the mythical and historical subjects favoured by the Pre-Raphaelites, but the church itself contained many genuine examples of early art forms. The Cawthorne Crosses are believed to be of 11th century vintage, but carved in the style of a much earlier Anglican design. One cross has been reassembled in the church yard, while another cross head is built into the chantry chapel wall (all are illustrated in W.G. Collingwood's *Angles, Danes and Norse in the District of Huddersfield*.

Out of sight but not out of mind, the history of Cawthorne did not lose its appeal for Roddam

Spencer-Stanhope who, not withstanding a move from Hill House to the Villa Nuti was instrumental in founding the village museum. Enlisted into a band of enthusiasts by the forceful Rev. C.T. Pratt, Roddam and his brother provided the means to convert the original cottage into a purpose-built museum. Estate craftsmen did the work, even using surplus stone and timber from estate buildings, and the result is quite unique.

Time warp is the sort of phrase that springs to mind when entering this little museum. Despite the addition of a new extension in 1983 things can't have changed much since the building was opened 'to scenes of rejoicing' in October 1889. Here are all manner of natural history exhibits, pieces of domestic equipment, old school books, coins, medals, man traps and miscellaneous bygones jumbled in a cosy clutter that is almost a museum exhibit in itself - there is even a genuine pair of crucks in the roof. Since 1951, the Cawthorne Victoria Jubilee Museum, to give it its full title, has been the property of the village, who paid £100 for it then and have raised many thousands for its upkeep since. Very much a part of village life, it is a singular achievement and a fascinating place to visit - for us it made a fitting conclusion to a fascinating evening.

EXHIBITIONS

These are not usually covered by this publication, but several current events are well worth a visit for the historically minded.

Huddersfield Art Gallery is staging an exhibition to mark the centenary of the Linthwaite artist Frank T. Lockwood. Born June 1895, Mr. Lockwood was educated at Linthwaite Central School and Huddersfield Technical College before serving his apprenticeship at Netherwood Dalton. After War Service he moved to Birmingham, before redundancy brought a temporary return to Huddersfield. In these years, 1921-1926, he worked as a commercial artist and exhibited as a member of the Huddersfield Art Society. Landscapes were a feature of his work, but later in life an interest in the then unfashionable subject of mills developed, a cotton mill Golcar was painted at the end of his life in 1960/61.

The artist kept detailed diaries and notebooks, and the exhibition contains a display case of such memorabilia, backed up with a useful leaflet written by his son Arthur.

The end of the Second World War 50 years ago is the inspiration for an exhibition at the Tolson Museum. **Attentive Soldiers and good citizens: Huddersfield People in Wartime 1757 - 1945** looks at local experiences of war during the previous two centuries both for servicemen and civilians.

Local history is increasingly seen as much as a community function as an academic subject, as the current displays in Meltham show. **Meltham Past and Present** has been mounted by Cultural Services and several local societies.

Looking forward, 1995 is a very special year for enthusiasts of the oval ball, as the sport celebrates the centenary of that important meeting at the George Hotel. An exhibition of relevant memorabilia is being planned for later in the year.

BOOKSHELF

If, as the saying goes, one picture is worth a thousand words, them this year's output must verge on the encyclopedic, with three volumes of photographs trying to catch the nostalgic eye.

Most substantial of the trio is **Images of Huddersfield** (£15.99) compiled by Isabel Schofield and published by Breedon Books. Although part of a national series, this is very much a local work produced jointly by Kirklees Cultural Services and the Huddersfield Examiner, whose photographic archive forms the basis of the book. The Examiner collection dates from 1946 and this influenced the decision to focus on the late 1940's and early 1950's, thereby "illustrating life in the area before the rapid changes of the 1960's." The large format and informative captions enhance the photographers, which provide a younger generation with a source of "I was there. . ." nostalgia.

By contrast **Old Huddersfield"** by Norman Ellis (Richard Steinlake £5.85) follows the traditional path of Victorian and early 20th century scenes, reproduced in the popular postcard sized format.

The ever prolific Hazel Wheeler also devotes one of her three new volumes to the photographic theme, though this time the theme is very personal. Most of the 200 or so photographs are from the author's family album, and the book positively oozes nostalgia. **Huddersfield in Old Photographs: a third selection** (Alan Sutton £7.99) recreates Huddersfield as many would, no doubt, like to remember it. Here are day trips to the coast, camaraderie and chips in the cinema queues, supper dances at the Princess (2/- on Saturday, 1/6d on Wednesday) and the simple pleasures of a "walk in the woods, bread and butter and boiled egg for tea" at Thunderbridge.

Other people's families are described in the author's subsequent work **Pennine People: clogs, flat caps and drip bread for breakfast** (Alan Sutton £8.99) Potted biographies of individuals and families illustrate aspects of life now gone. These are the slums of Castlegate, farms at Lingards and Golcar, pub life at the White House and an unrecognisably rural Sheepridge. The latter is only a stone's throw from Deighton, which merits an entire book of its own. **Half a pound of Tuppenny rice: Life in a Yorkshire village shop** (Alan Sutton £7.99). This is Hazel Wheelers own family and continues the story begun in **Huddersfield at War.**

Family life from the nursery window is the unusual perspective of **Family of four: a remembrance of childhood,** by Vivien Hirst. The Hirsts were well to do wool merchants and their houses around Greenhead Park and Edgerton offered the best of conditions in the first 20 years of the century.

Personal reminiscence is an increasingly important area of historical study, but like any other source material needs to be used with care. Much of the present mainstream publishing tends towards the unqualified nostalgic, while "serious" study is marginalised to the self-published and the specialist Journal.

The principal local periodical **Old West Riding** contains several interesting articles in its 1993 issue. David Eastwood delves into the unusual story of Lieutenant Harling of Almondbury an 18th century recruiting sergeant, officer and would-be gentleman. Twenty years in the life of West Slaithwaite National School at the beginning of the century are recounted by Philip Charlesworth, and an insight into mid 19th century America is offered by the letters of Abel and Daniel Stephenson.

Saddleworth Historical Society produced a special edition of their bulletin to commemorate the bicentenary of the Huddersfield Narrow Canal, and, despite an obvious bias towards the "wrong side" of the Pennines, sheds light on some lesser human aspects of local canal history. The Holmfirth floods are very familiar, but less well known was the disaster that overwhelmed Marsden on 29th November 1810. Known as the "Black Flood" after the peaty coloured water spilling from Diggle Moss Reservoir, it claimed up to 11 lives. One year later, the life of a remarkable individual began. He was Thomas Bourne, the "Standedge Admiral", who for 37 years regulated the flow of barges in and out of the Tunnel, whilst guiding their horses over the moor tops.

Such career contentment was, no doubt, a benefit bestowed on very few, for Huddersfield in the early 19th Century had an unhappy and turbulent reputation. The Luddites are arguably the most familiar, and most maligned, characters in our local history, and their story has been often told; but they didn't exist in solitary splendour, and setting them in a wider content of radical movements is the subject of **Liberty or death: Radicals, Republicans and Luddites 1793 - 1823** by Alan Brooke and Lesley Kipling (Workers History Publications £4.50). As might be expected, the authors are sympathetic to their subject, but thorough in their research. Sett in the context of radical thought, the authors describe the Luddite uprisings in detail, and carry the story forward through Parliamentary reform movements to the abortive uprising of 1820. Forced to suffer the "condescension of posterity" neither Luddites nor Radicals have enjoyed a favourable press, and the very name Luddite is rarely used, except in a pejorative context. Yet, even allowing for a certain partiality of treatment one cannot help but agree with the authors' conclusion that in current problems the "aspirations of the early Republicans, Luddites and Radicals take on a new significance".

Much Luddite activity took place in the Colne Valley, an area fondly recalled by Una Stothard Smith in **The Bridge: a history of Milnsbridge** (The Author £2.75). Despite a slight problem of geographical definition "hardly a village, never a town", this valley community is portrayed as an interesting and close-knit community.

For those who are new to the district, or simply wish to refresh their memory, a potted guide to the historical sights has been produced. **Discovering Old Huddersfield Part 1** by Gordon and Enid Hunter, takes two walks through the area, starting in the north and working south along the "old London Road" and then broadening out through "mansions and mills". Packed with information and well illustrated with maps and line drawings this is a useful £4.50 worth for those with a "mild curiosity about the past". The authors, incidentally acknowledge a debt to their mentor, Dr. George Redmonds, whose own latest work is now available. **Holmfirth place names and settlement** (£3.90) covers the pre-1700 place names in the Graveship of Holme from Arrunden c. 1308 to Yew Tree c. 1539.

And finally . . you've admired the building, watched the plays, now read the book, **Queen Street Chapel and Mission, Huddersfield** (£3) is available at last. Written by society member Edward Royle and published by the Society, this booklet places the mission in its wider context. Huddersfield was one of the first centres of Methodism in the country and the Chapel was one of the largest buildings of its kind. Written in an open, accessible style, this is a useful introduction to both Methodism and the building that survived many obstacles to become the theatre of today.

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